

THE WEB OF GOVERNMENT

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GOVERNMENT

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MACMILLAN

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Foreword

Now man, having a share of the divine attributes, was at first the only one of the animals who had any gods, because he alone was of their kindred; and he would raise altars and images of them. He was not long in inventing articulate speech and names; and he also constructed houses and clothes and shoes and beds, and drew sustenance from the earth. . . . After a while the desire of self-preservation gathered men into cities; but when they were gathered together, having no art of government, they evil intreated one another, and were again in process of dispersion and destruction. Zeus feared that the entire race would be exterminated, and so he sent Hermes to them, bearing reverence and justice to be the ordering principles of cities and the bonds of friendship and conciliation. Hermes asked Zeus how he should impart justice and reverence among men:—Should he distribute them as the arts are distributed; that is to say, to a favoured few only, one skilled individual having enough of medicine or of any other art for many unskilled ones? “Shall this be the manner in which I am to distribute justice and reverence among men, or shall I give them to all?” “To all,” said Zeus; “I should like them all to have a share; for cities cannot exist, if a few only share in the virtues, as in the arts.”

—PLATO, *Protagoras*, 322 (Jowett translation).

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PART ONE

THE EMERGENCE OF GOVERNMENT

CHAPTER ONE

MAN AND GOVERNMENT

I

MYTHS AND TECHNIQUES

When the scientists classified man as *Homo sapiens*, man the knowing one, the specific adjective was a kind of ornamental flourish. It was not used to separate man from other species of the genus *Homo*, for there are no other species. It was applied in effect to distinguish man from all other animals. Man is one of the primates, his nearest relations being the anthropoid apes. From them he has changed through the long obscure reaches of human evolution. His brain is much heavier. He walks erect. He has free hands and opposable thumbs. His forehead is advanced. But the organic pattern is the same. Cells, organs, structures of every kind, "all are practically identical in man and the higher mammals." Nevertheless scientists, recognizing that a difference of degree may be more crucial than a difference of kind, erected a separate genus for man and named its solitary species the knowing animal.

From the beginnings of human reflection man has been aware that herein lay his title to eminence. It is said darkly in the book of *Genesis* that our first parents broke the rules and ate of the tree of knowledge. The poets and philosophers of ancient Greece paid many tributes to the knowingness of man. Perhaps the finest of these is found in an ode in the *Antigone* of Sophocles, part of which may be freely translated as follows: